

SECRET

UNCLASSIFIED

RELEASED IN FULL

PAGE 01 SEOUL 18811 01 OF 02 130938Z
ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 SSO-00 /031 W
-----006763 130942Z /10

O 130927Z DEC 79
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2999
INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 SEOUL 18811

DECAPTIONED

EXDIS

E.O. 12065:RDS-3 12/13/89 (GLEYSTEN, W.H.) OR-M
TAGS: PINT, MORG, KS
SUBJECT: YOUNGER ROK OFFICERS GRAB POWER POSITIONS

1. (S) ENTIRE TEXT.
2. FOLLOWING ARE MY GROGGY CONCLUSIONS AT THIS STILL
EARLY STAGE OF THE DECEMBER 12 INCIDENT IN SEOUL.
3. WE HAVE BEEN THROUGH A COUP IN ALL BUT NAME. THE
FLABBY FACADE OF CIVILIAN CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT
REMAINS BUT ALMOST ALL SIGNS POINT TO A CAREFULLY PLANNED
TAKEOVER OF THE MILITARY POWER POSITIONS BY A GROUP OF
"YOUNG TURK" OFFICERS. MAJOR GENERAL CHUN TU-WAN, AD-
VANTAGED BY HIS POWERS OF SECURITY AND INVESTIGATION,
SEEMS THE MOST IMPORTANT FIGURE OF A GROUP OF MEN WHO
WERE VERY CLOSE TO PRESIDENT PARK AND GENERALLY ASSOCIATED
WITH SECURITY. VARIOUS MOTIVATIONS MAY HAVE BEEN AT
WORK: REVENGE FOR PRESIDENT PARK'S DEATH, CONCERN THAT
THE OLDER OFFICERS WERE MISHANDLING POLITICAL ISSUES AND
FEAR THAT UNLESS THESE WERE MANAGED MORE DECISIVELY THAT
SOCIAL UNREST WOULD BREAK OUT VERY SOON; LONGSTANDING
RIVALRIES; AND, WITHOUT DOUBT, THE LUST FOR POWER AND

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 SEOUL 18811 01 OF 02 130938Z

COCKINESS OF CERTAIN YOUNG OFFICERS THAT THEY KNOW BETTER
THAN THEIR ELDERS. ACCORDING TO A REPORT GIVEN THE
STATION CHIEF TODAY, THE ORGANIZING GROUP PLANNED ITS
ACTIONS FOR AT LEAST TEN DAYS AND DREW SUPPORT THROUGHOUT

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: CHARLES E LAHIGUERA
DATE/CASE ID: 19 OCT 2006 200404897

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

THE ARMED FORCES AMONG YOUNGER OFFICERS. THEY HAVE ALREADY DEVELOPED A LIST OF NEW ASSIGNMENTS IN THE ARMY, AND THE PROMOTION OF THE NEW PRESENT VICE MINISTER KIM YONG HYU TO DEFENSE MINISTER.

4. ACCORDING TO THE SAME REPORT, THE YOUNG TURK OFFICERS INTEND TO BE ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE. THEY ARE GOING TO BE ANTI-COMMUNIST, PRO-AMERICAN, CONCERNED WITH ADVANCING YOUNGER TALENT TO SENIOR POSITIONS, AND DETERMINED TO PURSUE AN ORDERLY PROCESS OF POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION. SOME OF THE ALLEGED MOTIVES ARE CONTRADICTORY, AND OVER TIME A MORE DISTINCTIVE PATTERN MAY DEVELOP. WHILE I AM ENCOURAGED TO HEAR THEY WANT TO AVOID SOCIAL UNREST AND ARE UNWILLING TO HAVE THEIR TROOPS "FIRE ON THE PEOPLE", I AM NOT AWARE OF MANY INSTANCES WHERE MILITANCY AND COCKINESS HAVE PERMITTED THE DEGREE OF TOLERANCE AND COMPROMISE NECESSARY FOR SUCCESSFUL POLITICAL ACTIVITY.

5. THE NEW PATTERN OF AUTHORITY WHICH WE HAVE BEEN GROPING TO IDENTIFY DURING THE PAST FEW WEEKS HAS NOW BEEN FURTHER COMPLICATED. CIVILIAN AUTHORITY HAS BEEN FURTHER WEAKENED. WITHIN THE MILITARY, THE DIVISIONS I ESTIMATED AS POTENTIAL DANGERS A FEW MONTHS FROM NOW HAVE ALREADY MANIFESTED THEMSELVES. AND FINALLY JUST AS WE WERE SURPRISED BY THE SPEED OF THIS POWER GRAB, WE SHOULD NOT COMPLETELY RULE OUT COUNTERMOVES OR SIMILAR ACTION BY OTHER DISCONTENTS IF THE GOING GETS ROUGH.

6. UNLESS ONE SWALLOWS THE YOUNG TURK RATIONALIZATIONS
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 SEOUL 18811 01 OF 02 130938Z

HOOK, LINE AND SINKER, THE DECEMBER 12 INCIDENT IS BAD NEWS FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW. THE MILITARY OF KOREA WHO HAVE REMAINED REMARKABLY UNITED FOR 18 YEARS UNDER THE FIRM, AUTHORITARIAN HAND OF PARK CHUNG HEE HAVE NOW ENGAGED IN ACTIONS OF INSUBORDINATION WHICH HAVE NOT ONLY GENERATED ANIMOSITIES THAT MAY TAKE YEARS TO WORK THEIR WAY OUT BUT HAVE ALSO SET A PRECEDENT FOR OTHERS TO FOLLOW. IN DOING SO, THEY TOTALLY IGNORED THE COMBINED FORCES COMMAND'S RESPONSIBILITIES, EITHER IGNORING THE IMPACT ON THE U.S. OR COOLLY CALCULATING THAT IT WOULD NOT MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE. BY THEIR ACTIONS THEY HAVE ALSO RUN A SERIOUS RISK VIS-A-VIS NORTH KOREA WITHOUT GIVING IT MUCH THOUGHT. ALTHOUGH WE MAY YET BE DELIGHTFULLY SURPRISED TO FIND THAT THEY ADOPT A POSITION ON POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION THAT STIFFENS THE BACK OF

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PRESIDENT CHOI AND PLEASES THE POLITICIANS, THE U.S. ARE THAT WE WILL BE DISAPPOINTED. IN AN EMOTIONAL POPULAR SENSE, THE SIMILARITY IN AMERICAN MINDS TO EVENTS OF 1961 MAY REOPEN ALL SORTS OF QUESTIONS THAT HAVE BEEN HELPFULLY CLOSED DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS IN TERMS OF AMERICAN ATTITUDES TOWARD KOREA.

7. ULTIMATELY OUR REAL INFLUENCE IS GOING TO STEM FROM KOREAN AWARENESS THAT THEY ARE SIGNIFICANTLY DEPENDENT ON THE U.S. IN BOTH THE MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AREA. AS TEMPER COOL AND INDIVIDUALS BEGIN TO REFLECT, WE MAY BE MORE EFFECTIVE THAN WE WERE LAST NIGHT IN TRYING TO EXERCISE OUR INFLUENCE. HOPEFULLY WE MAY FIND THAT SOME OF THE OFFICERS ARE MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO REASONING THAN OTHERS, AND WE MAY DISCOVER BETTER WAYS TO UNDERSCORE OUR CONCERN. LAST NIGHT GENERAL WICKHAM AND I DELIVERED A VERY STERN WARNING TO BOTH THE OLD MILITARY HIERARCHY

SECRET

NNN

SECRET

PAGE 01 SEOUL 18811 02 OF 02 130942Z
ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 SSO-00 /031 W
-----006776 130948Z /10

O 130927Z DEC 79
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3000
INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 02 OF 02 SEOUL 18811

EXDIS

AND THE NEW GROUP, TELLING THEM THAT THERE WOULD BE GRAVE CONSEQUENCES IF A MILITARY FALLING OUT UNDERMINED THE CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM TO BRING ORDERLY POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION TO KOREA. THE STRONG PUBLIC STATEMENT ISSUED TODAY IN WASHINGTON, WHICH WILL HIT A WIDER AUDIENCE, MAY PROVE AN EVEN MORE EFFECTIVE WARNING. (I HAVE HAD THE STATEMENT BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF GENERAL CHUN AND HIS COLLEAGUES).

8. I HAVE CALLED ON PRESIDENT CHOI TO EXPRESS OUR DEEP CONCERN ABOUT THESE IRRESPONSIBLE MILITARY ACTIONS (SEPTTEL)

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

AND GENERAL WICKHAM AND I AND OTHERS WILL DEVOTEDLY TAKE OPPORTUNITIES OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS TO CONVEY TO THE NEW MILITARY GROUP OUR CONCERN OVER THE DANGER OF IN-SUBORDINATION, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF THE NORTH KOREAN THREAT, THE IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINING CONSTITUTIONAL CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT, AND THE DANGER OF DISAPPOINTING POPULAR EXPECTATIONS OF POLITICAL EVOLUTION. WITHOUT THREATENING, WE CAN POINT OUT THAT ANY ONE OF THESE ISSUES COULD MUSHROOM INTO A SERIOUS PROBLEM IN US/ROK RELATIONS WITH DAMAGING EFFECT ON BOTH COUNTRIES.

9. AT THE SAME TIME, I DO NOT THINK WE SHOULD TREAT THE NEW MILITARY HIERARCHY AS SO BAD THAT WE DECIDE TO RISK SERIOUSLY ALIENATING THEM. WE WILL, THEREFORE, HAVE TO COUPLE OUR BLUNT TALK AND WARNINGS WITH REAFFIRMATION
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 SEOUL 18811 02 OF 02 130942Z

OF OUR COMMON INTERESTS, AND STATE THAT WE WISH THROUGH A PROCESS OF MUTUAL ACCOMMODATION TO CONTINUE OUR COOPERATION.

10. GENERAL WICKHAM, BOB BREWSTER AND I WILL WORK OUT A PROGRAM OF PEOPLE TO SEE AND THINGS TO SAY TO THEM. NONE OF US LOOKS FORWARD WITH RELISH TO THIS PROSPECT BECAUSE WE ALL HAVE BEEN ASSOCIATED DURING THE LAST SIX WEEKS WITH THIS TYPE OF MISSIONARY WORK AND SO MUCH OF IT SEEMS WASHED DOWN THE DRAIN.

11. GENERAL WICKHAM IS IN GENERAL AGREEMENT WITH THIS MESSAGE. GLEYSTEN

SECRET

NNN

UNCLASSIFIED